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ABSTRACT

Banpo is a village that existed 6,000 years ago near Xi'an in the Shaanxi Province of China. Artifacts unearthed from the Banpo site are all that remains of this prehistoric clan-based community. Five excavations conducted from 1953 to 1957 revealed the remains of 45 houses, 200-odd storage pits, six kilns, 250 tombs, and more than 10,000 stone tools and everyday articles. These artifacts have provided solid evidence for the existence of settled communities in prehistoric China. The Banpo community existed during the neolithic era of human history, which represents the final phase of the Stone Age. This sixth grade activity asks students to be part of a six member team of scholars whose task is to plan a trip to China and prepare for a scholarly competition, "Banpo Village: Scholars Battle or the Key to a Prehistoric Culture." The activity delineates a four step process to follow; lists resources; gives learning advice; discusses evaluation; and addresses the conclusion and reflection. The teachers notes section suggests grade level/unit; states lesson purpose; lists resources in print; addresses California state content standards, historical and social science analysis skills, and information literacy skills; discusses length of lesson; cites materials needed; and addresses interdisciplinary connections and adaptations for special needs students. (Author/BT)

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**Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE): Connecting California's Classrooms to the World**

# Banpo Village:
# Gone but Not Forgotten

**Sixth Grade Activity**
**by Tim Nguyen**

SO 034 527

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**http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/banpo/**

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Picture courtesy of Regent Tours

# Banpo Village: Gone, But Not Forgotten

Banpo is a village that existed some 6,000 years ago near Xi'an in the Shaanxi Province of China. Artifacts that have been unearthed from the Banpo site are all that remains of this prehistoric clan-based community. The village grounds occupied a physical area of 50,000 square meters, and consisted primarily of a residential section, a pottery area, and burial grounds. Five excavations that were conducted from 1953 to 1957 revealed the remains of 45 houses, 200-odd storage pits, 6 kilns, 250 tombs, and more than 10,000 stone tools and everyday articles. These artifacts have proven extremely valuable to archaeologists and scholars from other disciplines who study prehistoric and ancient Chinese peoples. Most importantly, they have provided solid evidence for the existence of settled communities in prehistoric China.

The Banpo community existed during the neolithic era of human history, which represents the final phase of the Stone Age. Here we see the use of gradually improved stone tools, and also the beginning of agriculture. We call this period the "Agricultural Revolution." It is one of the major turning points in human history because it signaled the end of hunting-and-gathering lifestyles and the beginning of settled, agricultural communities. Many scholars who have examined the Banpo artifacts believe that this Stone Age community was matriarchal in its social organization. This means that in family relations mothers were the head of the family, and family descent was traced through the maternal line.

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Stone Age communities such as Banpo, then, formed the earliest human settlements that were intended to be permanent. Although their culture disappeared long, long ago, the Banpo villagers' accomplishments remain a vital part of modern civilization's heritage--*our* heritage. Clearly, there is much we can learn about our own beginnings by studying their lifestyles. For this reason, we should make every effort to preserve their story as part of our historical record.

## The Task:

You are a renowned scholar who has just received an exciting opportunity. China's prestigious Ministry of Culture has recently announced an international competition among eminent scholars to be held at the site of the Banpo excavation. You are invited to participate in this competition as part of a six-member team of scholars from your country (see invitation letter below). The theme of the competition is "Banpo Village: Scholars Battle for the Key to a Prehistoric Culture."

Your task is to plan a trip to China and prepare yourself for the competition by studying prehistoric and ancient Chinese history. You should familiarize yourself with the artifacts that were found at the Banpo site, and learn how scholars have used these artifacts to explain the way that Banpo citizens organized their family and community life.

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# The Letter:

**Government of China**
**Ministry of Culture**

Dear_____,

Congratulations!

You have been selected to travel to the ancient village of Banpo to participate in this world class competition. The theme of this competition is "Banpo: The Lost Civilization: Battle of the Scholars."

You will join five other scholars to represent your country in this competition. Your team will compete against other teams from other countries by answering questions designed by the other teams. The six person team that answers the most questions correctly will win the competition.

On behalf of the Competition Organizing Committee, I wish all of you the best of luck and hope your stay here at Banpo is a most enjoyable one.

Sincerely yours,

A.B. Lee
Minister of Culture
People's Republic of China

# The Process:

**Your preparation and the actual competition should follow these steps:**

**Step 1:**
Locate Banpo on a map of China. Then, using construction paper, create your own map of China, and mark on your map the location of Banpo village near Xi'an. Your map should display the correct longitute and latitude for Banpo, and also the present-day time zone in which the Banpo site is located. If your teacher consents, you may liven your map project by using a "pop-up" design with the construction paper provided. Or, you can decorate the map with drawings of some artifacts that were found at Banpo (your teacher should set the guidelines for this activity).

**Step 2:**
Plan a detailed round-trip travel itinerary from Los Angeles to Banpo. You will need to determine the following information:

- Air transportation
- Hotel accomodations
- Transportation while in Banpo

Internet travel sites can help you to do this.

**Step 3:**
Now you must produce questions that will be posed to other teams during the competition. To begin, students should work independently to create two questions for each of the four categories listed below. Each student should also write down correct answers to the questions he or she creates. Then, after writing down these questions and answers on your own, you should meet with your team members and exchange your questions and answers. Discuss all of them as a group. By sharing what you have learned, you all will gain broader knowledge in each area of research.

Before the competition, your team should select the best two questions for each of the four categories, and be certain that the answers being provided for these questions are correct. That way, the responses of other teams to your questions during the competiton can be accurately assessed.

The questions and prepared answers should cover each of the following areas:

- History of prehistoric and ancient Chinese peoples
- Geographic features of the region in which the Banpo site is located
- Artifacts found at Banpo during five excavations from 1953 to 1957
- Family life and religious practices of the Banpo villagers (including the role of children)

You can use the websites provided in the "Resources" section below to research and formulate questions and answers.

**Step 4: The Competition**

- The class will be divided into five or six teams. Each team should choose a leader to coordinate activities within the team. The teacher should assign each team a number that will determine the order in which they will take their turns during the competition. The teacher will also serve as the referee and scorekeeper for the competition.
- Your teacher will read the questions, and the teams will take turns answering them. Each team will be given one minute to answer a question. If a team cannot answer the question being asked, your teacher will move on to the next team in order (skipping the team that prepared that particular question) until the question is answered correctly.
- After the question and answer period, your teacher will tally the number of correct answers from each team and announce the winner.

# Resources:

**The following Internet links will help you prepare for the competition:**

**History, Accommodation, Restaurants, Climate**
http://www.datacomm.ch/pmgeiser/china/

**Chinese Geography, History, Culture**
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cntoc.html
http://www.chinapage.com/china-rm.html
http://fractal.umd.edu/history/toc.html

**Banpo History and Artifacts**
http://zinnia.umfacad.maine.edu/~mshea/China/xian.html

**Tourism**
http://www.chinaetravel.com/

**Middle School Students' Writing Project**
http://www.kidlink.org/KIDPROJ/VChina/vcx296.html

**Travel Logs and Diaries**
http://www.thesalmons.org/lynn/china1.html
http://www.travel-library.com/asia/china/trip.nowak.html

**Artifacts Dating Techniques**
http://www.apva.org/exhibit/date.html

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## Learning Advice:

Comprehending a prehistoric culture like Banpo requires a sincere effort on our part to view the lives of its inhabitants from their perspective--through their eyes, their thoughts, and their beliefs. We must approach these prehistoric humans on their own terms, and not assume to know anything about their lifestyle based on our own deeply ingrained customs and beliefs. In order to formulate the best possible questions and answers for the competition, then, each student must do thorough research in each of the four categories listed in Step 3 of the "Process" section. Ample preparation and an open mind are the keys to success here. By learning as much as you can in these areas before the competition, you will greatly increase your chances of winning the competition.

Accurate notetaking and effective organization are very important. I recommend the Cornell Notetaking Model. This model uses two columns, one for notes and one for questions such as that shown below:

| Notes | Questions |
|---|---|
| | |

On the left hand side of the paper, take notes while you are looking for the information on the Internet. When you have finished, look back at your page of notes and write down questions that could be asked from this information during the competition. Select two of the questions for the competititon.

These pages of notes will be useful for review for your team to prepare for the competition.

# Evaluation

Your teacher will develop a "rubric" (a procedure for evaluating your work during this lesson) based upon the following criteria:

**Step 1: Map Making**

- Accurate positioning of Banpo village on the map
- Correct labeling of longitude and latitude
- Correct time zone
- Neatness
- Creativity

**Step 2: Itinerary**

- Accurate distance
- Accurate cost for round trip
- Accurate mathematical computation

**Step 3: Question/Answer Formulation**

- Thoroughness of notetaking by each person on the team
- Quality of questions and answers
- Degree of higher-level thinking skills displayed
- Accuracy of information
- Thorough knowledge of prehistoric and ancient Chinese cultures
- Accurate locations of other prehistoric or ancient sites
- Comments on artifacts found at the excavation sites

**Step 4: The Competition**

- Coordination of efforts by each team member
- Effective leadership for each team
- Clear communication of questions and answers during the competition
- Number of correct answers

## Conclusion

After completing the lesson, you should take time to reflect on the following questions:

1. What can we learn from ancient artifacts?
2. In what ways is Banpo similar to or different than other neolithic cultures?
3. Are there aspects of Banpo culture that carried over into later Chinese civilizations?
4. What influence do prehistoric and ancient cultures have on modern life?
5. Imagine yourself conducting an excavation. What feelings might you have when you see the first artifact? What should you do with the artifacts that you find? What steps should be taken in order to secure the excavation site? These are issues that professional archaeologists address in the course of their work, and it would be useful for you to give consideration to some of their concerns.

## Reflection

Through this lesson, your teacher has introduced you to a society that is very distant from our own in terms of time, physical location, and everyday lifestyle. This is a special opportunity for you, because by learning about the ways of prehistoric and ancient peoples, we in fact learn more about ourselves--about our origins, our cultural heritage, our limitations and our possibilities as individuals and as a society.

Just as learning is an ongoing process, so is teaching! As students who have just been introduced to a new area of knowledge, you are well-qualified to offer suggestions on how this learning process might be improved for the benefit of other students who will follow you. Consider the questions listed here. Your teacher will surely be interested in hearing your suggestions on how to improve this lesson:

1. Can this scholarly competition be better organized? How?
2. Did participants take responsibility for their research? If not, what could be done to make future participants more accountable?
3. Were instructions clear? If not, how can they be improved?
4. Were the Internet links useful? If not, how can they be made more helpful?

## Credits

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Last updated: 5 April 2001

# Teacher Notes

**Grade Level/Unit:** Grade 6, Unit 4: Early Asian Civilization

**Purpose of the Lesson**

Students will use resources on the Internet and other available resources to learn about prehistoric and ancient Chinese cultures, artifacts found in Banpo, and modern-day travel to China. While introducing students to the fascinating story of Banpo villagers, this activity will help them develop organizational skills in a group environment (setting up and running the competition), research skills (locating, selecting, and analyzing information on the Internet), and analytical skills (synthesizing information).

**Resources (in print):**

Armento, Nash, Salter, and Wixon, *A Message of Ancient Days* (Houghton Mifflin, 1991), p. 262-264

The Civilization Library, eds., *Early China* (Gloucester Press)

Joan Lebold Cohen, *China Today and Her Ancient Treasures (N.H.Abrahms, 1986)*

Kwang-Chih Chang, *Neolithic Developments in North China* (Yale University Press)

Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations* (Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1980), p. 5-8.

Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China* (University of California Press, 1984), p. 3-11.

**Content Standards:**

Grade 6 Unit 6: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of early China, in terms of .... the location and description of the origins of Chinese civilization in the Huang-He Valley

**Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills:**

Chronological and Spatial Thinking:

- Students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires, and the growth of economic systems.

- Students construct various timelines of key events, people, and periods of the historical era being studied.

Research, Evidence and Point of View:

- Students distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, essential from incidental information, and verifiable from unverifiable information in historical narratives and stories.
- Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.

Historical Interpretation:

- Students recognize interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.

**Information Literacy Skills**

- Evaluation of primary artifacts
- Map reading
- Accessing Internet resources
- Drawing logical conclusions from diverse pieces of information
- Team planning and project organization

**Length of Lesson**

This activity is designed for ten class periods, to be organized as follows:

- Two class periods for introducing students to the activity, organizing teams, sending out invitation letters, and setting up ground rules for individual and group responsibility.
- Two class periods for map making and researching travel information on the Internet.
- Three class periods for team research.
- Two class periods devoted to the actual competition.
- One period for reviewing the lesson and receiving feedback from students.

Class size will likely influence the time required to complete the various steps of this lesson, so teachers should feel free to shorten or lengthen any segment of the activity if necessary.

**Teacher Materials**

- Internet access and other research sources
- Paper for map activity
- Invitation letter to pass out to students

Note: Teachers might wish to have one or two students videotape the competition, in which case videotaping equipment will also be needed.

**Interdisciplinary Connections**

- Math: Students will perform mathematical computation
- Language Arts: Note taking, information research.

**Adaptations to Special Needs**

- Teachers might want to team up students by mixed ability.
- Teacher might wish to use a more personalized grading technique to evaluate students' performance during the lesson

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